

Empowering Students by Engaging and Collaborating with the APS Community



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Arlington Public Schools (APS) has established a mission to instill a love of learning in its students while preparing them to be responsible and productive global citizens. The Department of Instruction works closely with all central office departments and school leaders along with other stakeholders throughout the division and community to ensure that students are empowered to become the problem solvers, innovators and thinkers needed to contribute to their communities.

Serving as the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction for APS, it will be imperative for me to investigate through listening, learning, reading, reflecting, and observing to determine where we are in achieving this mission for our students. My initial review will focus on two key questions: What are the perspectives of students, staff, parents, task force and committee members, advisory groups and the community on our work in this area? What does the data tell us? This entry plan offers a framework to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of APS by engaging and collaborating with various constituencies within APS and the Arlington community.

As we work to support the mission of the division, and as the state of Virginia solidifies the Profile of a Graduate, multiple key questions will need to be answered during the course of the next several months in order to collaboratively outline a plan for our next steps. The Virginia Profile of a Graduate has been developed to ensure that schools are preparing students with Content Knowledge, Workplace Skills, Community Engagement and Civic Responsibility, and Career Exploration. This supports a whole child approach as we engage students in opportunities for community service, leadership, career interests, and political and social activism. As we work to implement a PreK-12 approach to support these processes and skills for our students, there are several questions that must be asked to build a solid understanding of where we are:

- What are the strengths of APS?
- How close is the division to supporting our students in reaching these benchmarks?
- What do we, as a community, want for our students as they move through the system?
- What are the critical needs for Arlington's students?
- What can the Department of Instruction do to further support schools and students in achieving their goals?

We are proud of the many strengths within APS, including:

- All schools are accredited by the Virginia Department of Education
- The 2016 Niche.com school rankings named APS as the #1 school division in the state of Virginia and #44 among all school divisions in the U.S.
- All APS high schools are ranked in the top 3% among all high schools in the United States on the annual Washington Post Challenge Index
- 11 APS schools received Virginia Index of Performance awards for advanced learning and achievement
- APS is the only district in Virginia in which every preschool slot funded with state dollars is matched and filled with a student
- A variety of innovative programs including Spanish immersion, STEM and arts initiatives, and K-12 IB programs are offered to students

Detailed Entry Plan Objectives by Constituency Group

Constituencies	Entry Plan Objectives	Entry Plan Activities
APS Advisory Groups	Establish effective partnerships with district groups to best understand their work and priorities to support students.	<p>Conversations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in individual conversations with advisory group chairs including ACI, Inclusion Task Force, Dyslexia Task Force, etc. <p>Structured Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend regularly scheduled advisory group meetings <p>Document Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACI recommendations
Community Leadership	Establish an alliance with community members to unite in a common purpose providing students with educational experiences that support the whole child.	<p>Conversations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite conversations with community leaders
Department and School Staff	<p>Develop relationships with all staff in order to build collaboration and align our work to support students.</p> <p>Collaborate with departments and school staff to determine areas of need for all students.</p>	<p>Conversations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus groups Informal conversations during school site visits <p>Structured Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend regularly scheduled department meetings <p>Document Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Satisfaction Survey Results and Key Findings Employee handbook Department plans
Department of Instruction Staff	<p>Develop strong relationships with the Instruction team.</p> <p>Conduct an analysis of curriculum and programs.</p> <p>Assess current professional development programs and capacity for meeting the needs of all staff.</p> <p>Collaborate with offices to determine areas of need for all students.</p> <p>Develop a shared mission, vision, and long range plans for the Department of Instruction.</p>	<p>Conversations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in individual conversations with each member of the Department of Instruction <p>Structured Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a retreat with Instruction team Attend regularly scheduled weekly meetings Work with team to review disaggregated achievement data, instructional program alignment, and current goals and strategies Attend professional development offerings <p>Document Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department Plan Virginia Preschool Initiative program specifics Budget documents Patterns in student achievement data and achievement gaps Curriculum documents Department of Instruction website Professional development offerings Program evaluations Programs of study

APS Families	<p>Create and maintain an atmosphere that encourages and supports partnerships between schools and families.</p>	<p>Structured Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend regularly scheduled meetings of various parent groups <p>Document Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Satisfaction Survey Results and Key Findings Student and parent handbooks
School Board	<p>Develop a trusting, positive, collaborative, team-oriented relationship.</p> <p>Understand the core values and beliefs, structures, and goals and objectives of the collective board.</p>	<p>Conversations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in individual conversations with each member of the board <p>Structured Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend regular meetings with Chair and Board members <p>Document Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board agendas and minutes School Board Policy Manual Policy Implementation Procedures Capital Improvement Plan Retreat minutes and recommendations Monitoring reports
School and Department Leadership	<p>Understand the ways in which the system is currently operating.</p> <p>Participate as a team member committed to a highly effective cross-functional team dedicated to meeting the needs of all students.</p> <p>Collaborate with leadership teams to determine areas of need for all students.</p>	<p>Conversations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in individual meetings with school and department leaders focusing on alignment of key strategies <p>Structured Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leveled principal meetings Administrative conference Regularly scheduled ELT meetings <p>Document Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current and historical student achievement data for the division, schools, grade levels, courses, and student groups School management plans Department plans Data dashboard School report cards Strategic plan
Students	<p>Understand student perspectives about their educational experiences within APS.</p>	<p>Conversations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal conversations during site visits to classrooms <p>Structured Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus groups conversations <p>Document Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Satisfaction Survey Results and Key Findings
Teachers	<p>Create open, professional relationships to understand ways in which the Department of Instruction can support teachers in meeting the needs of students and families.</p>	<p>Conversations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal conversations during site visits to classrooms <p>Structured Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus group conversations Attend and participate in TCI and ITC meetings <p>Document Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Satisfaction Survey Results and Key Findings

We will continue to build on these strengths by supporting rigorous, relevant, and engaging learning experiences that challenge students and provide them with personalized learning opportunities. In implementing these experiences, we will expand on the current successes of the division to continue to support innovative and collaborative environments while strengthening community. Therefore, we will continue to:

- ensure all teachers have access to a written, viable, guaranteed and coherent curriculum developed by teachers that supports the depth of thinking required by state standards.
- focus on providing personalized educational experiences that support all students in becoming critical and creative thinkers, collaborators, communicators, and engaged citizens.
- sustain relationships with key community members and engage in partnerships with parents in our schools.
- maintain high quality, collaborative professional development opportunities.
- seek innovative strategies for reaching all of our students while ensuring that these strategies are thoroughly grounded in research.
- maintain high expectations for all students regardless of ability, socio-economic status, origin, or gender in order to ensure that academic achievement is not predicted by demographics, eliminating achievement gaps.

These elements are defined by a culture that supports continuous learning and improvement and is committed to student learning.

How this work is implemented will be determined by a variety of constituencies as well as through the learning that occurs during the entry plan outlined here. As shared throughout this document, listening and learning from many will be key in gaining a comprehensive understanding of APS, while working to develop strong collaborative relationships with a variety of stakeholders. At the same time, it is important to strive to ensure a seamless transition of leadership that maintains a focus on solid learning experiences for students. In order to achieve these goals, activities will include individual and group conversations as well as a review of data, documents and resources. Throughout the course of the activities outlined in this plan, a variety of data will be compiled to inform our department and strategic plans in order to align our work with the needs presented. This entry plan serves as a blueprint that works to support an environment of openness and collaboration as we continue to move forward in supporting the needs of the students we serve.

I look forward to collaborating with all stakeholders to expand on the many successes that students experience in APS. We will work toward a shared mission, vision, and purpose that has been determined by the community. Through policies, practices, expectations, and norms that support high academic achievement and a strong sense of community, including inclusive instructional opportunities and a unified approach, all students in APS will thrive. It is our work as a division to ensure students know what is possible and are given the tools, skills, and strategies needed to meet their goals. As educators, we are entrusted with the growth and success of all learners. Together, I am confident that we can ensure amazing things happen in our classrooms as well as throughout the community, for all of our students.



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